







**W**hat would you do if you were woken up tomorrow at the crack of dawn by two large men, handcuffed, dragged out of your home, and thrown in the back of a van? What would you think as this van takes you hundreds of miles away from your neighborhood and drops you off in an institution of white walls, fluorescent lights, and cold linoleum floors? How would you respond to the people in this institution when they force you to stand in a corner for weeks on end, to lift your knees to your waistline when you walk, to be silent when you want to be loud, to be loud when you want to be silent, and to carry buckets of rocks back and forth for twelve hours each day? Would you resist, rebel, run away, kill yourself? What if they locked you in a tiny room that smelled like urine and blasted A.A. tapes until you submit? What if they took your food away? Had someone follow you around all the time, even watching you shit? What if you were completely stuck in a behavior modification program like this for two years without seeing your friends, your home, or anything that might remind you of the real world?

These places exist, and kids are sent to them everyday. Parents have complete legal control over their children until the age of eighteen, and these institutions prey on parents' frustrations, convincing them to sign away their child's rights. Behavior modification programs reflect our society's attitude towards youth, treating us as less than full human beings. There is a vicious cycle where kids are treated with mistrust and thus don't learn to take responsibility for their actions. Many of us have caught onto the fact that the education system is actually an indoctrination system. School kills our curiosity by teaching us that learning means sitting in rows for twelve years, force-fed information by an authority figure. Some of us are even forced into group homes, juvenile detention centers, mental hospitals, and spirit-destroying institutions like the one described above. Regardless of whether an institution is private or state funded, meant to reform a rebellious teenage, to "cure" a mental disorder, or to remove a criminal from society, the mindset is the same: youth are not to be trusted, and coercion and punishment are acceptable means of solving problems.

Why do adults feel the need to exert such rigid control over us? Perhaps it's because youth tend to be more idealistic and less willing to accept the world as it is. It takes tears to teach someone to endure the monotony and superficiality that is so many peoples' lives. Behavior modification programs are part of this cycle of stagnation, so this reader was created to educate people about this little-known atrocity occurring in our own country, and to offer constructive ways to help youth without denying their freedom and individuality. It's a first step in the long struggle to shut these types of places down, and to encourage kids everywhere to take control over their own lives.

## Contribute to a new reader about abusive institutions for youth entitled: "TEENAGE LOBOTOMY: A ZINE ABOUT THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF YOUTH"

The reader will consist of:

- An introduction to the abuses that take place at therapeutic boarding schools, residential treatment facilities, and wilderness programs
- Personal stories and interviews from students, parents, and ex-teachers
- Discussion of alternative ways to help "troubled" teens, including art therapy, various forms of counseling (such as utilizing AA outpatient programs or talking to mentors for help), and other programs that encourage healing in positive ways.
- Information about mental health, youth emancipation and "maneuvering the system" (such as the prison system and juvenile detention centers)

### WE NEED YOUR STORIES!

They may include:

- Where you (or your child, or your friend) were sent
  - Specific disciplinary techniques used
  - Reasons for being sent away
  - What the staff was like
  - How the experience affected you (or your child, or your friend)
  - Approximate release rate
  - Legal actions taken against the institution (if there ever were any)
- These are only guidelines. You may tell your story in words, pictures, or any form of communication that will bring your experience to life. PLEASE SEND US YOUR WRITING AND/OR ART BY MARCH 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005, and keep it under three pages. Thank you.

This reader is being compiled by two teenage artists and writers- Nick, who was locked up in the Family Foundation School in New York, Second Nature Wilderness Program in Utah, and Saint Paul's Prep School in Arizona, and his close friend Sarah (Ketchup).

Contact us at:

Nick- mindweller@yahoo.com  
Sarah- orangescum@yahoo.com  
or write to  
3706 72nd Street 5H  
Jackson Heights, New York 11372